

*Conflicting Truths: Works by Melissa Joseph*

March 8 – April 8, 2023

List Gallery, Swarthmore College

Gallery Hours: Tuesdays–Sundays, Noon–5:00 PM



The List Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Melissa Joseph, the 2023 Marjorie Heilman Visiting Artist. Curated by Exhibitions Manager Tess Wei, *Conflicting Truths* brings together numerous wall-mounted and sculptural forms that prioritize intimacy in scale, irregular edges, and softness of image. Mining her family's photographic archive as the starting point for her subjects and scenes, Joseph translates these family snapshots through a range of processes, including: altering textiles through wet- and needle-felting, combining stoneware through inlaying, and forming delicate, linen surfaces through paper-making. What unites all of these processes is the use of friction and pressure to transform highly malleable materials into relatively taut forms: repetitively rubbing strands of wool in a soap-and-water mixture to interlace the fibers; flattening clay bodies of differing colors with a rolling pin to create continuous ceramic surfaces; and pouring and dripping linen pulp onto a screen to form an integrated sheet of paper.

Raised in rural Pennsylvania by her father, a surgeon who emigrated from Kerala, India, and her American mother, the artist's multicultural background is an integral theme throughout her practice. In basing her subjects and settings on family photographs, some works feature her late father and other relatives of Malayali heritage living in India, while other pieces include various maternal family members and moments from Joseph's own childhood. Through material translations of this personal archive, Joseph forms a new architecture of interpretation wherein her visual language oscillates between soft and firm, natural and industrial, remembered and imagined. In shifting between these materials, methods, and influences, the works in *Conflicting Truths* articulate Joseph's own family history, while offering space to more broadly consider how identity is formed and reformed by fluctuating relationships to space, memory, and ideas of belonging.

Joseph received a BA in Individualized Study from New York University in 2003, an associate's degree in Textile Surface Design from the Fashion Institute of Technology in 2006, a Master's in Art Education from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2008, and a Master's in Fine Arts from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 2018. Her work has been shown in numerous exhibition spaces, such as the Museum of Contemporary Art, Arlington, VA; New Art Dealer's Alliance, Miami, FL; the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, Salt Lake City; Dieu Donné, NYC; Jeffrey Deitch, NYC; REGULARNORMAL, NYC; Fleisher Art Memorial, Philadelphia; Bradley Ertaskiran Gallery, Montreal; Bravin Lee, NYC; Rider University, Lawrenceville, NJ; The Delaware Contemporary, Wilmington, DE; Woodmere Art Museum, Philadelphia, PA; Rider University, Lawrenceville, NJ.

She has been awarded residencies by numerous organizations, including the Museum of Arts and Design, Greenwich House Pottery, the Archie Bray Foundation, Fountainhead Arts, Dieu Donné, Textile Arts Center Artist, and Chautauqua School of Art. Joseph's work has been written about and featured in *Hyperallergic*, *Architectural Digest*, *CNN*, *New American Paintings*, and *Maake Magazine*. She currently lives and works in New York City.